



# Disposing of Sharps Safely

Millions of individuals with serious health conditions manage their care at home. For example, people with diabetes use syringes and lancets to test their blood sugar every day. All this creates a lot of medical waste. What's the best way to handle this waste?

The best way to protect trash handlers and sewage treatment workers against disease and injury, and avoid attracting drug abusers looking for syringes to reuse, is to follow these guidelines for containment and disposal of sharps.

## ***Containment***

- Contain the sharps in your own home.
- Use a puncture-proof plastic container with tight-fitting screw top. A bleach bottle is good. Don't use glass because it can break. Coffee cans are not recommended because the plastic lids come off too easily. A red sharps container may be purchased at local pharmacies as well.
- Label the container clearly. Write "Contains Sharps" with a waterproof marker directly on the container or on masking tape on the container.
- Once a syringe or lancet is used, immediately put it into a container. Screw on the top. Don't clip, bend or recap the needles because of potential injury to yourself.

- Keep the container away from children!
- When the container is full, screw on the cap tightly. Seal it with heavy-duty tape to be extra safe.

## ***Disposal***

There are different options for getting rid of the container of sharps. Some cities and towns have more options than others do. Here are the best ways for safety, health, and protection of the environment.

- Call local doctors, pharmacies, clinics, local hospitals, or nursing homes and ask if they accept properly contained sharps for disposal. Ask local diabetes educators or local American Diabetes Association office about sharps disposal programs.
- Call local public works department or solid waste manager. (Check the blue pages of the telephone book for their numbers.) Some communities have special household medical waste collection or drop-off days.
- Call local health departments and ask about special household medical waste disposal programs.

Consult your local department of public works for information about laws applying to disposal of household sharps along with household trash.